DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 268 SO 027 038

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TITLE Integrating Visual Art into Social Studies.
PUB DATE 6 May 96
NOTE 37p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Active Learning; *Art Activities; *Art Appreciation; Cultural Activities; Discipline Based Art Education; Grade 5; Intermediate Grades; Teaching Methods; *Visual Arts
IDENTIFIERS California; Chagall (Marc)

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on two questions: (1) Can visual arts be an effective way for students to express what they have learned in social studies?; and (2) Can creative activity improve motivation, participation, attitude, and enhance learning in social studies? The sample for study was drawn from 75 fifth-graders in 3 classes in a school located in a predominantly blue-collar neighborhood of California. The ethnic breakdown was 63% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 3% African American, and 31% Caucasian. The principal investigator teaches social studies and art to all three fifth-grade classes from which the sample was drawn. A teacher's log of anecdotal records and comparison of student work before and after the integration of art into social studies were the research methods used. The topic for student study was a unit on world explorers, coupled with a discipline-based art education less on on Marc Chagall with students then creating their own interpretations of their favorite explorer. The study concludes that visual art increases understanding of social studies by giving students an opportunity to process information two ways, verbally and visually. (EH)

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ED 405 268

INTEGRATING VISUAL ART INTO SOCIAL STUDIES

Presented to Dr. Mary Jo Lass

California State University Long Beach

EDEL 570

May 6, 1996

By

Julie Romero

SO027038

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INTRODUCTION

In researching the topic of integrating the arts into social studies I found a wealth of research and studies that expressed and proved my own heretofore unexpressed, unproven, but very strong feeling, that there is a better way to teach.

Since children learn by different processes - some by receiving visual information, others by physical participation or hands on manipulation, teachers serve their students best by instructing each type of learner in their best genre. By transmitting information using multiple modes, instruction is more likely to be comprehended and concepts more readily imprinted on the brain.

When art is integrated as an equal partner with social studies, we as educators can teach the whole child. Teachers are always looking for new and exciting ways to present their subject. Using the arts as a teaching tool creates excitement by its very difference from the drudgery of reading chapters and answering questions.

Since creativity distinguishes humans from other life forms, children need to be given the opportunity to experiment with their ideas and to experience the creative drive that leads to higher level understanding in various disciplines.

Art can give insight to all other areas of learning. The study of art enhances the study of history - and, of course, the

reverse is true. Art opens a door through which we can see the past. We can view other peoples, other cultures, and find ourselves, with the same dreams and desires, the same humanity that long ago people experienced.

In this research I intend to show how integrating the arts into the social studies curriculum enhances learning and gives a sense of personal involvement to the students.

I intend to show that using visual art stimulates students to become more receptive to learning and builds community. That the arts intensify our imaginations, encourage flexible thinking, and help produce disciplined effort.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Finding a better way to teach is a challenge that has been with educators since the idea of passing information from one person to another - one tribe to another - began.

Since social studies is the most important look we can take of ourselves as human beings, this paper proposes to answer two questions about the infusion of the arts into social studies as a special and better way to learn.

Can visual arts be an effective way for students to express what they have learned in social studies?

Can creative activity improve motivation, participation, attitude, and enhance learning in social studies?

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Imperial Elementary School is one of thirteen K-5 elementary schools in the Downey Unified School District. The school area for Imperial includes many apartments, but most of its people live in modest single-family homes. While some parents hold white-collar jobs, the majority work in blue-collar jobs. The area is a relatively stable, family oriented community with an ethnic breakdown as follows; Hispanic 63%, Asian 3%, African Americans 3%, and Caucasian 31%.

The classroom groups with which we will conduct our study has approximately the same ethnic mix as the community at large. There are seventy-five fifth grade students in the three classes consisting of an almost equal number of boys and girls - 37 boys, 38 girls. The three fifth-grade teachers team teach, with each teacher specializing in two areas. I teach social studies and art to all three fifth-grade classes and this paper represents the study I have done to show that the arts enrich the social studies curriculum and bring enthusiasm, interest, and excitement to what was once considered a dull subject.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Evaluation and Assessment Techniques

In this research project I will examine the learning modes of fifth grade students in the subject of social studies. I will use two techniques to determine how much information is gained and retained and what teaching methods are the most effective. I intend to show that the integration of the visual arts into the social studies enhances learning, attitude, and enthusiasm.

The two evaluation techniques used for this study included a Teacher Log where anodotal records of student participation, motivation, interest level, comments, and questions were recorded.

The second technique, and the most interesting one, was a comparison of student work before and after the integration of art into the social studies curriculum. The object of this part of the research was to see if students were better able to express what they had learned in typical written form or if using visual arts was a more effective way to express what they had learned in social studies.

Research Design

In this research a unit on world explorers was taught using storytelling, literature, dramatic play, and chapters from our social studies book. The lessons were assessed by written

projects, journal entries, group discussions, and written tests (Appendix A). While these ways of teaching were well, even enthusiastically, received by the majority of the class, full participation, the dream of all teachers, was not there. Probably 15%. of the students in the three fifth grade classes were not doing as well as they, or I, wanted.

When looking at the written tests of these fifteen percent it was obvious that they needed a venue other than the written word to express clearly what they were getting in class. While direct questioning showed that they did understand the lesson, their journal entries were halting and their test answers incomplete.

After thinking over the problem of these students I came to the conclusion that "different strokes for different folks" might be more than just a saying. There needed to be a way to increase my students understanding by providing them with a different way to process information.

Two experiences led me to try a new way of teaching. One was attending a workshop put on by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts; and the second was writing a research paper on Integrating Visual and Performing Arts into Social Studies. Convinced that integrating the arts into social studies might be more than just the subject of a paper, I decided to implement the idea into my classroom, hoping to motivate and inspire my struggling students.

After researching the integration of the visual and performing arts with social studies I became intrigued with the idea of immersing the children into the social studies curriculum through the use of fine arts.

When the class had completed the unit on World Explorers I gave a Discipline Based Art Education lesson (Appendix B) on the artist Marc Chagall. Included in the lesson (Appendix C) was a personal history of the artist, a critical analysis of his painting, aesthetics, and an overview of surrealism. I explained that symbolism is an integral part of this kind of art.

Chagall's village is a memory/dream of his life in Russia as a child. There are two main characters facing each other, a man and a cow. There is a figure dreamily floating through space. At the top of the painting is a village under a midnight sky, and at the bottom a tree representing life (See Appendix D).

Using Chagall's surrealistic style and vision of his life, my students were asked to project themselves into history as one of the explorers we had studied. They were to draw their own vision, using Chagall's style, showing what their expectations, hopes, and fears would be as this explorer. By using symbols and drawing on their knowledge of the subject, they were to create their personal masterpiece of history. Every student presented to the class, explaining their painting and it's symbolism. The students who were unable to express themselves well in writing

were very enthusiastic and articulate in explaining their art work to the rest of the class. The artists became teachers as they described details forgotten by some, until that moment. As the connections were made, students were able to achieve a climate of high personal participation and motivation and relate to the people and events of long ago.

By using a surrealistic style, the children were more free to express themselves - to be adventurous, than they might have been using a more conventional style.

By providing the students with the means of creativity through art instruction active involvement is achieved - they learn by doing (See Student Work Samples - Appendix E-J).

The Teacher's Log proved to be a valuable and interesting tool to use in assessing attitudes, interest, and motivation, among the students. Typically, a teacher feels she "knows" her class quite well, but by recording student action and reaction in a log one can see much more deeply into the classroom psyche. Comments that might normally be lost in the hub-bub of a busy classroom are recorded in black and white to amaze and delight with their insightfulness (See Appendix K).

The interest level in the explorers was high from the beginning of the unit, but took a giant leap in excitement when students were told they were to create a painting on the explorer of their choice. Motivation soared. I found that some of my students who had a hard time expressing themselves on the

written test were amazing in their depiction of their favorite explorer. Details were abundant, attitudes enthusiastic. Pride of ownership was very apparent. The students higher-order thinking skills seemed to improve and in two or three cases carried over into other areas of their schooling.

The most interesting example of a student who didn't do well on written tests growing before my eyes, was Joe, an indifferent student, who found art to be his "open sesame" to a new life in the classroom. His painting of Cortes finding gold was outstanding - his pride matchless. Peer approval, along with teacher approval, made this a peak experience for him. Joe, as noted in the Log, found a sense of personal involvement with history through art. As his confidence in himself grew, his attitude in class was enthusiastic and he was open to learning as he had not been before. Joe had found his medium to shine.

Joe had five pieces of art accepted in the school art show and, even better, his verbal and written skills have definitely improved since his success at storytelling through art.

Materials

Materials used for this project:

Print - Marc Chagall's "I and the Village"
Teacher Log
Explorer Written Test
Paints and brushes
Art lesson on Marc Chagall

RESULTS

My findings are that I have proven that visual arts is an effective way for students to express what they have learned in social studies. That creative activity improves motivation, participation, attitude, and enhances learning.

Using the arts as a vehicle for expressing what they have learned gives students a unique opportunity to use their creative talents and imaginations. It involves them personally and allows them their own vision of events. Art allows students to use pieces of learning to create a meaningful whole. It gives them ownership of their creation.

Visual art increases understanding of social studies by giving students an opportunity to process information two ways - verbally and visually. It opens a door for students who are unable to express themselves adequately in written form by giving them a different vehicle for self-expression.

Integrating the arts into social studies motivates students to learn more by making history come alive, helping them see that these were real people - real events. History is the most exciting subject we teach and integrating art as a tool for learning brings emotion to the events of the past and inspires passion to the subject.

Integrating the arts into social studies excited the students and stimulated the desire to know more. Social Studies

is ideally suited to cross-curricular learning because it's broad scope and subject matter lends itself to integrating art into real-life experiences.

CONCLUSION

The visual arts need to be incorporated into the social studies curriculum. If we want children to think creatively we must provide the tools for this process to take place.

Social studies is an ideal subject for integrating the arts. It helps develop critical thinkers and empowers students to express their own personal view of events. Involvement with the subject is heightened and understanding increased with the real participation involved in the creative process.

The integration of the arts into social studies is essential to good teaching. Multiple teaching methods extends the learning experience to students unable to process information effectively through traditional ways of teaching.

Children can only learn what they are taught. We as teachers need to use every method at our disposal to teach in a way that each child can learn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We need to change! The world is changing and we as educators need to change, too. Whenever a new idea or method of teaching is proposed, resistance is immediate. But! Because we have always done it this way is not a viable reason to keep teaching a certain way. When new and exciting ideas appear on the teaching horizon, we must embrace them, use them, educate our parents to them.

We should present to the P.T.A. and our school boards - show them how effective new methods of teaching can be. Old line board members who resist change without good reason should be voted out to make room for (hopefully) parents who care about quality education and are not bound by the past to hold the line where it is.

We need researchers to validate the integration of the arts into all subjects, not just social studies, to show the enrichment that takes place when they are offered as alternative ways to learn.

Creativity is crucial to a child's success and integrating the arts into a school's curriculum is an effective way to help a child to be creative and to be a critical thinker.

Art is not just for the talented.

Appendix A

EXPLORERS

Choose two of the following questions and write a short paragraph for each explaining your answers.

- Why was there such a great need to explore new lands?
- Why were spices so important?
- What impact did the explorers have on the natives of the lands they discovered?
- Who do you feel was the most important explorer and why?

DISCIPLINE-BASED ART EDUCATION

Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) is a comprehensive, sequential approach to instruction and learning in which art and works of art are studied through four foundational disciplines that contribute to the creation, understanding and appreciation of art: aesthetics, art criticism, art history and art production.

WHY?

The goal of DBAE is to develop students' abilities to understand and appreciate art:

- Knowing theories of art
- Responding to art
- Knowing contexts of art
- Creating art

Art is taught as an essential component of general education and as a foundation for specialized art study.

WHAT?

Content for instruction is derived primarily from the disciplines of aesthetics, art criticism, art history and art production. These disciplines provide:

- Conceptions for the nature of art
- Bases for valuing and judging art
- Contexts in which art has been created
- Processes and techniques for creating art

HOW?

Curricula are written with sequentially organized and articulate content at all grade levels.

Works of art are central to the organization of curricula and to integration of content from the disciplines.

Curricula are structured to reflect comparable concern and respect for each of the four art disciplines.

Curricula are organized to increase student learning and understanding, recognizing appropriate developmental levels.

DISCIPLINE-BASED ART EDUCATION GOALS

The major goals of a discipline-based art education program (DBAE) are:
To enable students to make art, understand its cultural and historical backgrounds, interpret and respond meaningfully to works of art, and make critical judgments about art.

The objectives of DBAE are:
To use the principles of art to express ideas and feelings, and give form to their environment; to help students understand the art of their own and other cultures and understand the interaction of art and society, to help students respond to and evaluate the art work of others; to form the ability to select and use art materials specifically suited to the various media, and to help students apply the disciplines and processes of art to improve the quality for their personal life and that of society.

Rationale:
- Art is an established part of the general education curriculum.
- Studying art, talking and writing about it, are designed to build a store of images that are taught in relation to language.
- Cultural and historical understanding includes art images

Content:
Art instruction includes the four disciplines:

Aesthetics - Questions and theories about artworks
Criticism - Writing and talking about art
History - Images and time lines used to build a framework for styles
Production - Techniques for Expression

Discipline - Based Art Education

I. Title: Marc Chagall, I and the Village

II. Title of Lesson: Using Surrealism to Express Ideas

III. Theme of Curriculum Unit: Exploration

IV: Objectives:

1. Identify characteristics of surrealistic painting
2. Identify elements in the painting that relate to this period in Chagall's life
3. Analyze realistic versus abstract art
4. Explore how images and color reflect emotions

V. Procedure:

Motivation:

1. Students view Chagall's painting
2. Discuss realistic versus abstract
3. Have students look at the world from an upside down perspective (bend over, look between legs, and describe what you see)
4. Have students discuss in groups things of comfort (e.g. family, friends, home) and what colors and shapes are associated with these comfortable things

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5. Have students discuss things unknown to them (e.g. starting a new school, moving to another state) and what colors and shapes are associated with the unknown

6. Compare and contrast the known and unknown.

Applying the Four Disciplines:

Art History: See attached sheet

Aesthetics:

What does Chagall's painting tell us? Does knowing about the artist change your feelings about the painting?

Is a painting that shows the world as it really is better than one that doesn't?

Criticism:

Discuss colors, shapes and images used in the painting. What feeling might Chagall have wanted to convey in this painting? What objects appear to be in a strange place in the painting? What might these objects represent?

Production:

Materials: paper, crayons, markers, paint, pastels, glue, scissors

Review maps of the early explorers and have students discuss the different ways the known world and the unexplored world were represented. (The known world was usually centrally located and drawn as detailed as possible, while the unknown world often contained monsters, sea serpents, and other elements of fantasy.)

Preparation: Tell students to imagine that they are explorers.

Process: Students are to project themselves into history as one of the explorers we have studied and create their own vision, using Chagall's style, showing what their expectations, hopes, and fears would be as this explorer.

* After all works are completed students should present their work to the class.

VI. Curriculum Materials/Resources:

Raboff, Ernest, Marc Chagall: Art For Children 1968, Doubleday and Co., Inc.

Encyclopedia, 1993, Grolier Electronic Publishing.

Surrealism (Art), 1993, Grolier Electronic Publishing.

VII. Vocabulary:

Surrealism
Dreams
Exploration

VIII. Process for Evaluation:

Did the students:

- Use surrealism to express ideas
- Use color and placement of objects to convey a feeling
- Participate actively in discussion groups

Note:

* I like to create a rubric with my students to use in the assessment process.

IX. Interdisciplinary Connections:

Social Studies:

1. Study maps of the early explorers further. Discuss: Were they surrealistic?

2. Compare and contrast the early explorers with space exploration today.

Language Arts:

1. Write a description of the piece you created.

Science:

1. Research what scientists know (and don't know) about space.

X. Content Checklist:

_____ **Aesthetics: (Understanding the nature of art)**

_____ **Criticism: (Responding and judging art)**

_____ **History: (Knowing history about art/artist)**

_____ **Production: (Creating art)**

_____ **Multicultural: (Includes diverse perspectives)**

Art History

Marc Chagall
Born 1887

Marc Chagall is considered one of the most original and imaginative geniuses of the twentieth century. He created a style uniquely his own. His world is a world of fantasy and dreams, colorful and exciting.

Chagall was never part of any art movement, (although he is considered a forerunner of Surrealism) he borrowed techniques and styles from other artists at various times. In many of his paintings he used colors in planes or stripe that had nothing to do with the subject of the painting.

Most of Chagall's early paintings are based on themes from his life in a small Russian village and Yiddish folklore. The paintings include animals, flowers, brides, and lovers floating in space. Chagall's subjects are often in the process of metamorphosis, changing and merging with other beings. A woman may have the head of a bird, or the body a fish; a cow may fly through the night sky. Recurring symbols in Chagall's paintings are maternity, fertility, flying, and the night sky.

Much of Chagall's later life was spent making murals, mosaics, and stained glass windows. Among his most famous works are the Ceiling of the Paris Opera, and two huge murals painted for the Metropolitan Opera in New York. These murals are among his most important works. They are the Sources of Music, and The Triumph of Music.

Chagall's love of literature, religious symbols, and folk tales, and the way he weaves these themes into his paintings make him unique among artists.

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Appendix E

Good Bye

I put good bye as my title because I'm saying good-bye to my wife to go on a voyage. The ying/yang sign stands for that we will always be together. We are crying because the search for gold and riches is dangerous and I might not come back.

At the top of the picture is a giant squid, an Indian, and the Ocean Sea. They stand for all the unknown stuff.

The ship and the stars show how they could navigate across the ocean.

Casey

Good Bye

Casey

Appendix F

Balboa

I drew Balboa looking at his dog because where Balboa went his dog went. I drew the Spanish flag because that is where he came form. I also included a barrel because that is how Balboa and his dog stowed away on the ship. I also drew in my picture a sea creature because they were afraid monsters were in the ocean back then. I drew a flag that said Pacific because of the fact that Balboa was terrific because he discovered the Pacific Ocean. He was a good leader of men.

Dominique

Balboa

Dominique

Appendix G

A New World

This is Henry Hudson trying to get ships to find a new way to the East for spices and silk. The Emperor blocked the land route because he didn't want Christianity in his kingdom, so Europeans had to find a different way . The compass rose stands for the bravery of the explorer. The globe shows the earth is round. At the bottom of the picture is gold and riches which is what Hudson wanted. At the top of the picture are unknown dangers. Hudson died because his crew mutinied because they had no food.

Kristin

A New World

Kristin

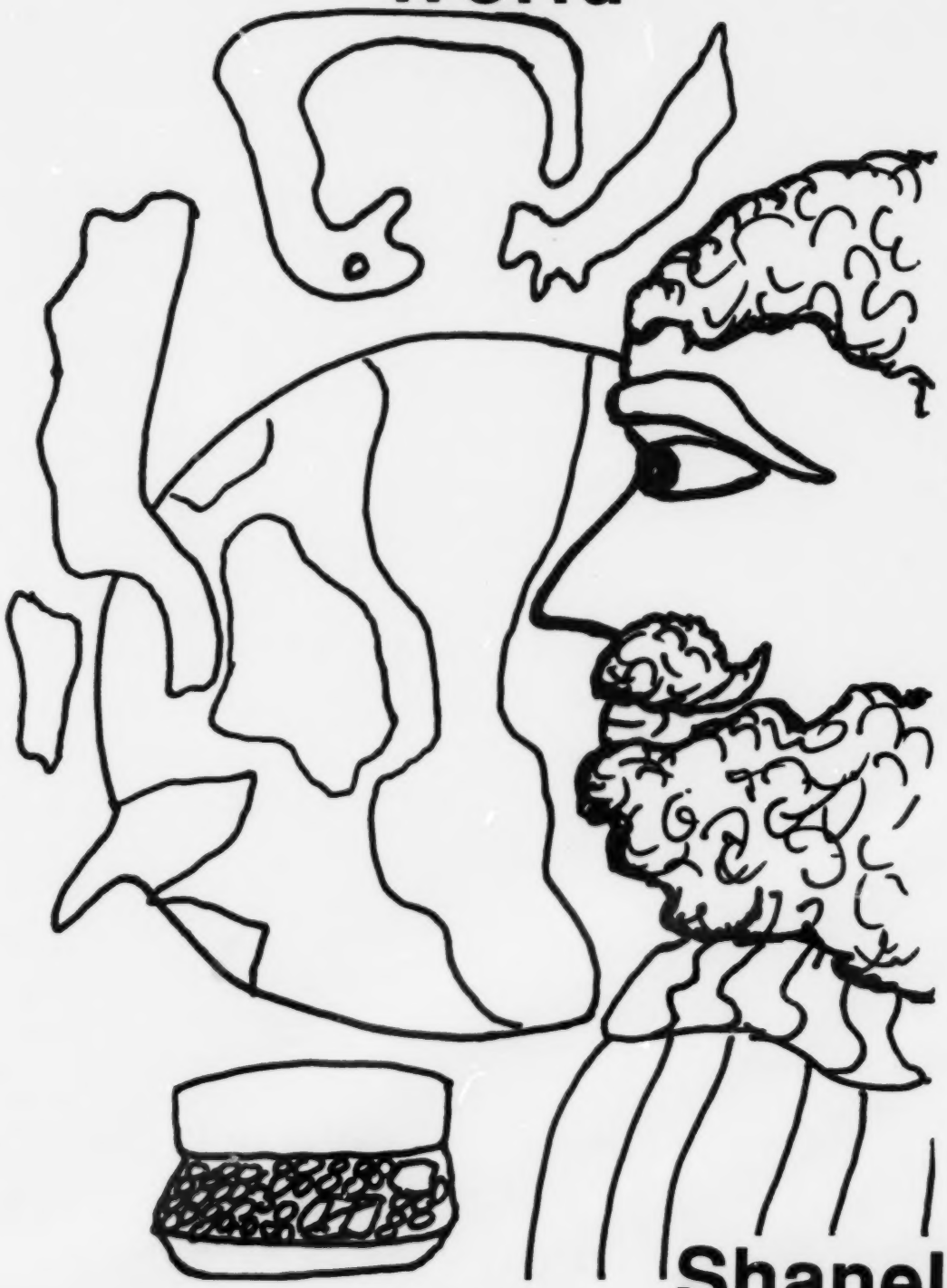
Appendix H

The Man Who Sailed The World

My painting is about one country which was explored by Magellan. On the bottom of my painting is a treasure box showing the riches, gold, and spices, which meant a lot to explorers. Magellan was painted looking at something familiar like one of the countries he went to, the Philippines and its straits. He looked at that because he had found many islands just in one place. The sea monster represents how the people thought sea monsters lived in the sea. The circle that's in the middle of the painting represents how he sailed the world but died during a war. Magellan is wearing different colors which means he's a great explorer. I used real colors so people can tell how he sailed, what he did and what the objects are. As I painted Magellan, I pushed my brush up and down to make a texture, so it would look like he had a dark and lumpy beard. For this, I have learned how to draw, paint, and have fun. I entitled this painting "The Man Who Sailed the World."

Shanelle

The Man Who Sailed The World



Shanelle

Appendix I

Gold!

This is Cortes and he was looking for gold and imagining he was holding it. The flag means he claimed the land for Spain. The building is the temple of Montezuma. The sea monsters are wanting to eat Cortes. He burned his ships so his soldiers would have to fight. The stars are the lights of the night he sailed under.

Joe

Gold!
14K
Joe

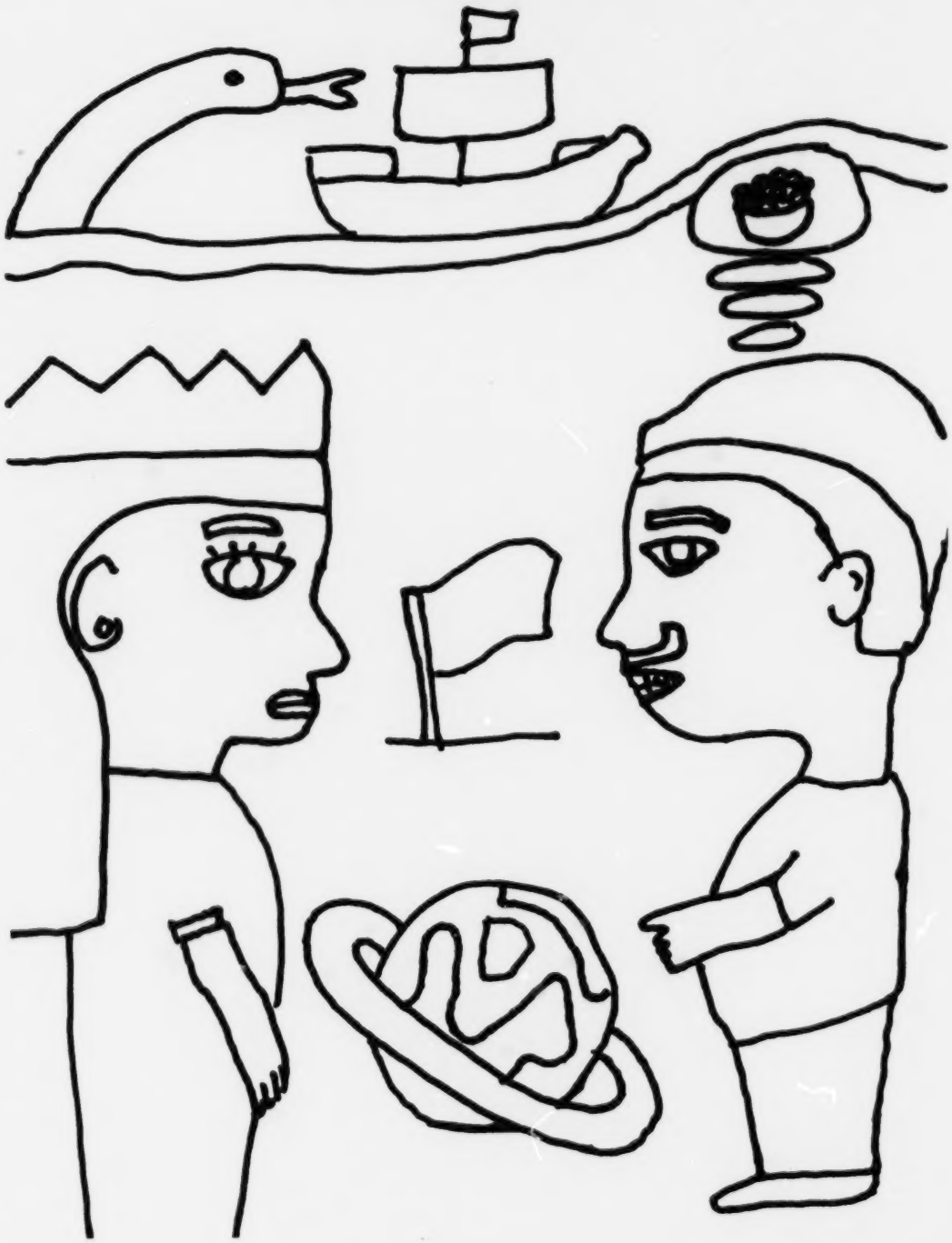
Appendix J

Magellan

I drew Magellon asking the Queen for money to buy ships to sail around the world. I drew the world to symbolize that he went around it. I drew the sea with a ship and a big sea monster because they used to believe there were fierce monsters in the Ocean Sea. The gold and fame is what explorers hoped to get from their dangerous journeys. I drew a flag so he could claim the land for Spain. He died before completing his voyage.

Linsey

Magellan



Linsey

Student Comments (Teacher's Log)

* Art helps me remember what we have learned. Like when we hear a lesson and when we paint and have to write about it.

* In social studies I like using art because it helps if I do and see the actual picture.

* I remember what I have learned when we draw or paint what we have learned like an explorer.

* To do a painting about social studies you have to know something to paint about. The more paintings we do the more we have to learn and remember.

* Art makes me learn about social studies. I like social studies when we put art into it.

* What I like best about social studies is painting about Columbus and how he figured out the way.

* To make social studies more interesting we need more art mixed in because I need to see the picture.

* When we draw pictures and take notes it helps me remember a lot.

* Painting makes me see somethings I have forgotten.

* Art helps me learn in social studies because it helps you remember what you have learned. If you remember what you drew, you remember what you learned.

* I like painting because it makes me feel like I am what I am painting.